



10 ACCESSIBLE CALIFORNIA PARKS

A guide to 10 California
Parks with accessible
means of transportation





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AÑO NUEVO STATE PARK

[Ano Nuevo State Park](#) is a prime example of California's coastal ecosystem. The park is renowned for its rugged coastline and the annual congregation of northern elephant seals. These magnificent creatures can be observed during their breeding season, which peaks between December and March, offering a unique wildlife experience. The park also features sandy shores, coastal prairie, and dune fields, providing habitats for a variety of flora and fauna. Hiking trails wind through the park, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the coastal environment and possibly catch a glimpse of the endangered San Francisco garter snake or the red-legged frog.

In addition to its wildlife, Ano Nuevo offers a historical perspective with its light station, a lighthouse dating back to 1872. The park's natural diversity is complemented by exhibits and guided walks, which provide educational insights into the area's ecology and history.

Transportation to Ano Nuevo State Park is facilitated by its proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area. The Santa Cruz METRO provides bus services to the park entrance, with the nearest stop being a short walk from the main visitor areas. Once inside the park, visitors can navigate the trails on foot to experience the natural beauty up close. For those requiring assistance, the park offers accessible features, including boardwalks and viewing platforms.

- Located along the scenic coast of California, Ano Nuevo State Park is accessible via public transportation through the use of [SamTrans](#) bus services.
- Visitors can take the Route 17 bus from Santa Cruz to the park.
- The [Caltrain](#) will transport you to the Mountain View Station, from where you can transfer to the Santa Cruz METRO bus service.
- The Santa Cruz METRO Route 40 also connects to the park area, but doesn't bring visitors directly to the entrance.
- Travelers may need to arrange a taxi or rideshare service for the last leg of the journey.
- For those coming from the San Francisco Bay Area, the SamTrans Route 294 provides a connection from Hillsborough to Half Moon Bay, where visitors can then take a taxi or rideshare to Ano Nuevo State Park.
- During the peak season, a shuttle service operates within the park to transport visitors from the parking area to the viewing sites.



POINT LOBOS STATE NATIONAL RESERVE

[Point Lobos State Natural Reserve](#) is often referred to as the "crown jewel" of California's state park system. The reserve's rugged coastline, hidden coves, and panoramic ocean views are a testament to the natural beauty of the Monterey Peninsula. The area is a hotspot for marine life, including sea otters, seals, and migrating gray whales. The reserve's kelp forests are teeming with aquatic species, making it a popular destination for kayaking and diving.

On land, Point Lobos offers a range of hiking trails that meander through diverse landscapes, from coastal meadows to Monterey pine forests. The reserve is also a haven for birdwatchers, with over 250 bird species recorded in the area. The Whalers Cabin Museum provides a glimpse into the cultural history of the region, once a bustling whaling and abalone industry hub.

Public transportation to Point Lobos is available via Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), which operates routes from Monterey and Carmel to the reserve. The park's compact size makes it easy to explore on foot, and there are several accessible trails and viewpoints for visitors with mobility challenges. During peak seasons, a shuttle service within the reserve reduces traffic and enhances the visitor experience.

- Point Lobos State Natural Reserve does not have direct public transportation links, but the Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) provides services to nearby areas.
- The routes offered by Monterey-Salinas Transit stop near the entrance to the reserve.
- Visitors can use MST's Route 22 to reach the reserve from Monterey or Carmel, followed by a scenic walk or bike ride to the entrance.
- The MST trolley service provides a seasonal connection between Carmel and the reserve.
- There are no internal transportation services, so visitors should expect to walk between each of the scenic trails and views.
- The distance from Carmel to Point Lobos is approximately 3.5 miles, making it a feasible trek for avid hikers or those who prefer to combine public transport with exercise.
- Visitors who prefer cycling to the reserve can take advantage of the bike-friendly roads. The Pacific Coast Highway (also known as Highway 1), has bike lanes that are often used by cyclists heading to Point Lobos.



JULIA PFEIFFER BURNS STATE PARK

[Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park](#) is famous for its stunning 80-foot waterfall that drops from granite cliffs into the ocean below, a sight best seen from the Overlook Trail. The park's beauty extends beyond this iconic feature, with redwood groves, chaparral-covered slopes, and panoramic ocean views. The diverse habitats within the park support a variety of wildlife, including the California condor, which has been reintroduced to the area.

Hiking trails offer access to the park's natural wonders, including the Ewoldsen Trail, which winds through redwood forests and offers views of the Ventana Wilderness. The park's underwater area is part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, providing protection for marine life and opportunities for exploration through diving.

Public transportation to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park is facilitated by the Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) bus service, which provides access to the Big Sur area. The park itself is relatively compact, making it easy to explore on foot. Accessible parking and restrooms are available, and the main overlook to the waterfall is accessible to all visitors.

- The Big Sur bus line provides the primary means of public transportation to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, with a focus on servicing the scenic Highway 1 corridor.
- Seasonal operation of the Big Sur bus service is designed to accommodate the peak tourist seasons, ensuring that visitors can access the park during times of high demand.
- The alternative is the MST bus service, which runs to the park but infrequently, so this necessitates careful planning by visitors. It is recommended to check the latest schedules and plan trips accordingly to avoid long waits or missed connections.
- With a bus stop near the park entrance, the Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) provides a direct route for visitors traveling to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, facilitating convenient access to the park's main attractions.
- The absence of an internal shuttle service within Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park means that visitors should be prepared for a pedestrian experience, as the park's natural features are best explored on foot.



MOUNT TAMALPAIS STATE PARK

[Mount Tamalpais State Park](#) is a hiker's paradise, with over 60 miles of trails that offer stunning views of the San Francisco Bay, the Marin County hills, and on clear days, the Farallon Islands. The park's varied terrain includes redwood groves, oak woodlands, and open grasslands, providing a rich tapestry of Northern California's natural beauty. The mountain itself, affectionately known as Mount Tam, is a beloved landmark and provides a dramatic backdrop for outdoor activities.

The park's extensive trail network connects to the surrounding protected areas, including Muir Woods National Monument and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Visitors can explore the park on foot, by bike, or on horseback, with trails ranging from easy walks to challenging climbs. The East Peak Summit offers panoramic views and is a popular destination for both sunrise and sunset watchers.

Public transportation to Mount Tamalpais State Park is available through the Marin Transit system, which connects with the San Francisco Bay Area's extensive transit network. The Muir Woods Shuttle provides seasonal service to the park, offering a convenient option for visitors without cars. Within the park, the trails and facilities are well-maintained, with accessible options available at key points of interest.

- Mount Tamalpais State Park, near San Francisco, benefits from the Marin Transit system.
- Marin Transit offers bus services (West Marin Stagecoach) that stop near the park's Pantoll Ranger Station and East Peak.
- Visitors can take Route 61 of the Marin Transit system to reach the park on weekends and holidays.
- The West Marin Stagecoach also provides access to the park with Route 68, which is a seasonal service tailored for hikers and bikers.
- The Muir Woods Shuttle is another option that connects Sausalito, Marin City, and Mill Valley with Mount Tamalpais on weekends and holidays.
- There is no shuttle service within the park, but hiking and biking are both popular ways to explore its diverse landscapes.

[View transit information here](#)



PFEIFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK

[Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park](#), often referred to as a "mini Yosemite," is a verdant oasis along the Big Sur coast. The park's redwoods, conifers, oaks, sycamores, cottonwoods, maples, alders, and willows create a lush canopy, while the Big Sur River adds to the idyllic setting. The park's terrain varies from riverbanks to rugged mountainous areas, offering a diverse range of hiking opportunities.

The park's trails lead to stunning features like the Valley View Overlook, which provides a breathtaking vista of the Big Sur Valley and the Pacific Ocean. Wildlife is abundant, with opportunities to see black-tailed deer, gray squirrels, and a variety of bird species. The park also offers environmental campsites for those looking to extend their stay amidst nature.

Public transportation to Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park is provided by Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), with services connecting the park to the surrounding communities. Once at the park, visitors can access the main areas on foot, and there are several accessible trails and facilities to accommodate guests with different needs. During peak tourist seasons, a shuttle service within the park helps to alleviate traffic and protect the natural environment.

- Similar to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park is accessible via the Monterey-Salinas Transit's Big Sur bus line.
- The Big Sur bus service operates seasonally, providing connections from Monterey and other nearby areas.
- The park's popularity warrants additional planning when using public transportation due to the limited number of trips made by the bus service.
- Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park's MST service offers rides to a bus stop near the park entrance.
- There is no internal public transportation, so the park's campgrounds, trails, and river are primarily accessed on foot.
- Visitors using public transportation should be prepared for the possibility of delays or cancellations due to the rugged terrain and occasional inclement weather affecting the Big Sur area.

[View transit information here.](#)



BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK (BEST IN SUMMER)

Big Basin Redwoods State Park, which holds the esteemed title of being California's oldest state park, having been established as far back as 1902, is widely recognized for its ancient coast redwoods. These impressively tall and grand trees, some of the oldest living things on our planet, provide a vital contribution to the park's rich biodiversity. Moreover, they present a visually stunning backdrop that enhances the inherent grandeur and majesty of the landscape, making every vista a breathtaking sight to behold.

The park boasts an extensive network of over 80 miles of trails, each one different from the last, and catering to all levels of hiking proficiency. These trails range from tranquil, peaceful walks such as the well-loved Redwood Loop, perfect for casual strolls to admire the ancient trees, to more challenging hikes like the Skyline to the Sea Trail.

Unfortunately, the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire, one of the largest wildfire events in California's history, along with the ongoing recovery efforts, have significantly impacted public access to Big Basin. As it stands, the park is now open but only for limited day-use access. Reservations for parking, while not mandatory, are strongly recommended. This is due to the limited availability of first-come, first-served parking, a result of the measures taken to ensure public safety amidst the recovery work.

- Santa Cruz Metro offers weekend service during summer months to Big Basin Redwoods State Park with Bus Route 35.
- Using METRO services for transportation to the park exempts them from paying any entrance fees.
- For those that choose to travel by personal vehicle, they are encouraged to make a day-use [parking reservation online](#) in advance to guarantee a spot.
- The park ensures accessibility for all community members by providing various transportation options.
- To ensure a smooth visit, guests are encouraged to plan their trips in advance, taking into consideration bus schedules and peak times.
- To encourage the use of electric vehicles (EVs), Big Basin Redwoods State Park has installed several EV charging stations near various entrances and visitor centers.

[California State Parks and Santa Cruz METRO Offer an Eco-Friendly Way to Visit Big Basin Redwoods State Park this Summer](#)



CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK LOS ANGELES

[Crystal Cove State Park](#) in Los Angeles is a valued sanctuary that provides habitats for both marine and terrestrial wildlife. The park boasts a 3.2-mile long beach, including tide pools that are home to numerous species of marine invertebrates, as well as some species of fish. The sandy coves and the underwater park promote a rich biodiversity, including kelp forest ecosystems, which are among the most productive and dynamic ecosystems on the planet. They serve as nurseries for many marine species, providing food and shelter, and thus sustaining the marine food web.

Inland, the park's canyons and trails are lined with native plants and provide habitat for wildlife, including several species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. This variety of habitats helps to maintain ecological balance and supports species diversity. The park's protected status ensures the preservation of these habitats, allowing for ongoing scientific study and educational opportunities. The historic district of beach houses that have been restored to reflect their original 1930s charm offers visitors a fascinating glimpse into the area's past as a vibrant seaside colony.

The park is highly accessible by public transportation. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) provides bus services that connect directly to the park, and there's a shuttle service that operates within the park during the summer months.

- The first bus to Crystal Cove State Park, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) bus number 1, arrives nearby at 5:42 AM.
- The bus fare to the park is approximately \$2.00.
- The Coast-Ent 8681 El Morro bus station is an 11-minute walk to the park.
- Visitors can park for free and hike or mountain bike into the park from Ridge Park Road.
- Visitors can hike into Crystal Cove State Park from the adjacent Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, where parking is only \$3.
- The Moovit app provides comprehensive public transit information.
- The Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) has bike lanes that cyclists can utilize to reach the park.
- Several hotels and resorts in the vicinity of Crystal Cove State Park offer their guests transportation services to the park.



SOUTH YUBA RIVER STATE PARK SACRAMENTO

[South Yuba River State Park](#) boasts the longest single-span covered bridge in the world, and offers quite a scenic spot for outdoor enthusiasts. The park's 20 miles of trails include the Independence Trail, a wheelchair-accessible path that offers spectacular views of the Yuba River. The trail was once an old mining ditch, but now provides a unique opportunity for all visitors, regardless of physical ability, to immerse themselves in the park's natural wonders.

One of the most popular activities at South Yuba River State Park is swimming in the Yuba River's crystalline waters. The natural swimming holes are a refreshing respite from the heat of the California sun, offering a perfect blend of relaxation and recreation. Additionally, for those interested in the history of the Gold Rush, gold panning is a unique activity that allows visitors to step back in time and experience a piece of California's heritage. Hiking along the park's trails also presents opportunities to witness the diverse flora and fauna of the region, with the potential to spot wildlife in their natural habitat.

While many visitors drive, South Yuba River State Park is also accessible via public transportation. The park can be reached by bus, with stations located near the area in Sacramento. The bus route servicing the South Yuba River area in Sacramento is number 7, making it an accessible destination for those relying on public transit.

- The South Yuba River is accessible by bus, with stations located near the area in Sacramento.
- The bus route servicing the South Yuba River area in Sacramento is number 7.
- The cost of a bus fare to South Yuba River ranges from \$1.50 to \$3.00.
- The admission fee for South Yuba State Park is \$5, separate from the transportation costs.
- Public transportation ensures that South Yuba State Park remains accessible to a diverse range of visitors.
- Travelers should check the latest travel advisories and bus service updates for safety, especially during peak seasons or inclement weather.
- It is advisable to purchase bus tickets in advance to avoid any last-minute inconveniences or delays.
- For visitors planning an extended stay, there are several lodging options in the vicinity of the park, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds.



SILVERWOOD LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA

[Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area](#) is a haven for water enthusiasts, nestled in the heart of the San Bernardino Mountains. The lake is a popular destination for boating, fishing, swimming, and water-skiing, with the surrounding areas offering picnic spots and hiking trails. The park's elevation provides a cooler climate, making it a refreshing escape during the hot summer months.

The park's natural beauty extends beyond the lake, with chaparral-covered hillsides and impressive mountain vistas. Wildlife in the area includes mountain lions, bald eagles, and ospreys, adding to the park's allure for nature lovers. The Pacific Crest Trail also traverses the park, attracting hikers from around the world.

Public transportation to Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area is available through the Mountain Transit system, which provides access from the nearby communities. The park is equipped with accessible facilities, including picnic areas and restrooms, and the marina area is designed to be accessible to all visitors. For those exploring the park's trails, there are options suitable for a range of abilities.

- Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area is accessible by taking the Mountain Transit's Off-the-Mountain service to connect with the MARTA bus line.
- Alternatively, [Victor Valley Transit Authority](#) offers a service that stops in the nearby town of Hesperia.
- Visitors may need to arrange a taxi or rideshare from Hesperia to the park.
- For those looking to visit Silverwood Lake from San Bernardino, the Marta Off-the-Mountain service operates Route 6 on weekends, providing a direct link to the park during peak visitor times.
- There is no internal shuttle service, so visitors should plan to walk or bike to enjoy the lake and surrounding trails.
- Due to the infrequent service of the bus lines, visitors should verify the schedule in advance and plan their trip accordingly.
- Visitors should be aware that cell phone reception can be spotty in the mountains, so it's important to download or print out the bus schedules and maps ahead of time.



SONOMA COAST STATE PARK

[Sonoma Coast State Park](#) is a spectacular mosaic of beaches and bluffs stretching along the Pacific Ocean. The park's rugged coastline is punctuated by long sandy beaches and secluded coves, offering visitors a chance to enjoy the serene beauty of the Northern California coast. The park is also a focal point for observing migrating gray whales, sea lions, and numerous seabirds.

The park's diverse landscapes include tide pools, marshes, and the Russian River, which provides a habitat for salmon and steelhead trout. The Kortum Trail offers hikers spectacular coastal views and the chance to explore the park's varied ecosystems. The park's history is also on display at the Fort Ross State Historic Park.

Public transportation to Sonoma Coast State Park is available through Sonoma County Transit, which offers bus services to the park from Santa Rosa and other surrounding towns. Within the park, facilities such as the Bodega Head and Goat Rock Beach areas are accessible to visitors with mobility challenges. The park's trails and viewpoints are well-maintained, providing a range of options for all visitors to enjoy the stunning coastal scenery.

- Sonoma Coast State Park is one of the more challenging parks to access via public transportation.
- The nearest bus service is provided by Sonoma County Transit, but it doesn't go directly to the park.
- The Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit ([SMART](#)) provides options for visitors traveling from the San Francisco Bay Area. The train connects to Petaluma, where visitors can transfer to bus services for closer access to the park.
- Visitors can use Route 20 to reach the vicinity but will either need to walk, or arrange for a taxi or ride-sharing service to complete the journey.
- The Coast Route 95 bus operates on weekends and connects Santa Rosa and Bodega Bay, with stops near the park.
- There is no internal public transportation at Sonoma Coast State Park, so visitors should be prepared to walk to explore the park's beaches and coastal trails.

[View transit information here.](#)

A photograph of three cyclists riding on a paved path. The cyclist in the foreground is a woman wearing a grey jacket and a black helmet, smiling. Behind her are two other cyclists. A sign in the background reads "Silver Strand State Beach".

RESOURCES

Ano Nuevo State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=523

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=571

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=578

Mount Tamalpais State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=471

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=570

Big Basin Redwoods State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=540

Crystal Cove State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=644

South Yuba River State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=496

Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=650

Sonoma Coast State Park

California Department of Parks and Recreation
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=451

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